



NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

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Port of Whitman County to join Washington Ports Broadband Cooperative, LLC

Collaboration will increase efficiency and reduce costs

Colfax (September 23, 2019) — The Commissioners of the Port of Whitman County (Port) approved a motion to join the Washington Ports Broadband Cooperative (Cooperative). The Cooperative is being formed through an interlocal agreement between the Port of Bellingham, Port of Kalama, Port of Pasco, Port of Ridgefield, Port of Skagit County, and Port of Whitman County. The Port was the fourth of the six initial members to vote and it is anticipated that the remaining two ports will vote in early October.

In April 2000, the state legislature authorized port and public utility districts to build telecommunications infrastructure. Since that time, the Port, and other port districts throughout the state, have invested in broadband infrastructure in their communities and have collaborated on specific projects through individual interlocal agreements. The collaborations led to the recognition that consolidating administrative and operating functions would allow the member ports to continue to provide state-of-the-art digital communication services to unserved or underserved areas within the state while increasing efficiency and reducing costs. As a result, the concept of the Cooperative was developed and presented to the Port's commissioners in early 2018. Discussions continued in subsequent Port commission meetings throughout the planning and development process. The Port's commissioners reviewed drafts of the interlocal agreement, the Cooperative's financial pro forma, and analysis by the Port's legal counsel and staff.

The interlocal agreement specifies that the members designate a manager of the Cooperative and the Port of Whitman County has been asked to serve in that capacity for a minimum of three years. The Port was selected due to its proven ability to develop infrastructure, partner with local and regional carriers, and provide affordable, state-of-the-art telecommunications opportunities. The Port will be compensated for managing the Cooperative and obtained independent financial analysis which showed that the Port will realize a cumulative net positive cash flow of \$679,045 in the first three years of Cooperative management.

The Port can utilize these funds to advance economic development in Whitman County, support future staffing models and needs, and invest in opportunities that further the mission of the Port.

"This business model is a win-win for the Port of Whitman and the Cooperative's member ports but, most importantly, the resulting work of the Cooperative will be a huge win for those in rural, underserved areas of our state, including Whitman County." says Joe Poire, Executive Director.

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About the Port of Whitman County

The Port of Whitman County is dedicated to improving the quality of life for all citizens of Whitman County through industrial real estate development, preservation of multi-modal transportation, facilitation of economic development and provision of on-water recreational opportunities.

RCWs 53.08.005, 53.08.370, and 53.08.380 allow Ports and PUDs to build telecommunications infrastructure and offer it wholesale to service providers. Under these provisions, the Port has worked to develop a telecommunication plan and infrastructure to facilitate enhanced telecommunications services countywide. The Port works with telecommunications providers to build infrastructure that helps local providers enhance telecommunication services offered to rural communities.

We invite you to explore our website and learn more about our port and the wonderful Palouse region we call home; a great place to live and a better place to work.